<u>**Listing of Claims**</u>:

1. - 15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) An operating device, comprising:

[[-]] an operating element;[[,]]

[[-]] a front element comprising an operator-side front side and rear side;[[,]]

[[-]] a recess in the front element, <u>said recess having a first cylindrical</u> <u>guide extending from the rear side of the front element to form a first contact face</u> <u>on said front element,</u> ~~in which~~ the operating element ~~can move~~ <u>being movable</u> <u>within said recess</u> and ~~which is~~ <u>said recess being</u> surrounded by [[a]] <u>the</u> first contact face on the front element;[[,]]

[[-]] the operating element comprising a <u>flat</u> second contact face which faces the first contact face and is configured such that it is in contact with the first contact face in a non-actuated position, and

[[-]] the second contact face <u>being</u> arranged to be removed from the first contact face upon actuation, wherein the first contact face on the rear side of the front element is of annular and flat configuration;[[,]]

[[-]] wherein the operating element is surrounded circumferentially by the flat second contact face which corresponds to the first contact face and is of annular configuration;[[,]]

[[-]] wherein the first contact face and the <u>flat</u> second contact face have a medium to high surface quality;[[,]] and

[[-]] wherein the <u>flat</u> second contact face of the operating element is stressed against the first contact face of the recess by ~~means of~~ a first elastic element such that a permanently defined surface pressure is set between the first contact face and the <u>flat</u> second contact face, and the first contact face and the <u>flat</u> second contact face are arranged to interact as a seal against spray water and dirt.

17. (Currently Amended) The operating device according to claim 16, wherein the operating element is arranged to be movable such that [[it]] <u>the operating element</u> is guided in the recess in the front element.

18. (Currently Amended) The operating device according to claim 16, wherein the operating element comprises a first guide arranged to extend on the rear side in ~~the~~ <u>an</u> actuation direction and interacts with a corresponding second guide.

19. (Previously Presented) The operating device according to claim 18, wherein the first guide and the second guide include a contour in the circumferential direction arranged such that the operating element cannot be rotated.

20. (Currently Amended) The operating device according to claim 16, wherein the first contact face and the <u>flat</u> second contact face comprise a conical configuration.

21. (Previously Presented) The operating device according to claim 16, wherein the operating element is a pushbutton and the first elastic element is arranged and configured such that

when the operating element is actuated, the first elastic element exerts a restoring force on the operating element counter to the actuation direction.

22. (Previously Presented) The operating device according to claim 21, wherein the operating element is arranged to be secured against rotation.

23. (Currently Amended) The operating device according to claim 21, wherein the operating element is secured against rotation in the recess by ~~means of~~ a second contour of the recess and a first contour of the operating element which is assigned to said second contour.

24. (Currently Amended) The operating device according to claim 16, further comprising a carrier arranged on the rear side of the front element, ~~and~~ the front element [[is]] being fastened to said carrier.

25. (Currently Amended) The operating device according to claim 24, wherein the operating element further comprises a hold-down which interacts with the carrier with a form-fitting connection such that, in [[the]] an absence of the front element, [[the]] a restoring force from the first elastic element on the operating element is absorbed by the carrier by ~~means of~~ the hold-down.

26. (Currently Amended) The operating device according to claim 16, further comprising:

[[-]] a hold-down element arranged on the rear side of the front element;[[,]]

~~and~~

[[-]] wherein the operating element has includes a hold-down which interacts with the hold-down element with a form-fitting connection such that, in the an absence of the front element, the a restoring force from the elastic element on the operating element is absorbed by the hold-down element by means of the hold-down.

27. (Previously Presented) The operating device according to claim 24, wherein the hold-down element is fastened to the carrier.

28. (Previously Presented) The operating device according to claim 26, wherein the hold-down element is fastened to the carrier.

29. (New) An operating device, comprising:

an operating element;

a front element comprising an operator-side front side and rear side;

a recess in the front element, in which the operating element can move and which is surrounded by a first contact face on the front element;

the operating element comprising a second contact face which faces the first contact face and is configured such that it is in contact with the first contact face in a non-actuated position, and

the second contact face arranged to be removed from the first contact face upon actuation, wherein the first contact face on the rear side of the front element is of annular and flat configuration;

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wherein the operating element is surrounded circumferentially by the second contact face which corresponds to the first contact face and is of annular configuration;

wherein the first contact face and the second contact face have a medium to high surface quality and comprise a conical configuration; and

wherein the second contact face of the operating element is stressed against the first contact face of the recess by a first elastic element such that a permanently defined surface pressure is set between the first contact face and the second contact face, and the first contact face and the second contact face are arranged to interact as a seal against spray water and dirt.